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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 11/28/08

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(1) Defense minister, U.S. ambassador concur on need for efforts to secure funding for U.S. force realignment

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 2) (Full)

November 27, 2008

(Tokyo)

U.S. Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer called on Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada at the Defense Ministry yesterday. In exchanging views about the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, the two agreed on the need for the U.S. and Japan to make efforts to secure funding so that the realignment will be completed by 2014 as agreed on between the two countries.

Hamada met with Schieffer for the first time since he became defense minister. The ambassador indicated that Japan-U.S. relations will remain unchanged even after the change of administration in the U.S., saying: "The U.S. is in the period of transition, but I think

the Japan-U.S. alliance will remain important, and important matters will be handed over (to the next administration)."

Looking back over his days as ambassador to Japan, Schieffer stated: "The agreement on U.S. force realignment contributed to adding momentum to the Japan-U.S. alliance. Given that the agreement was reached after very protracted, tough negotiations, I hope that Japan and the U.S. will strengthen bilateral ties by implementing bilateral commitments."

Hamada replied: "The realignment plans should be completed by 2014. Although there are budgetary problems, we will make utmost efforts to translate our bilateral agreement into action."

After meeting with Hamada, Schieffer told reporters: "In promoting the realignment process, it would be the best way for Japan to include a large sum of expenses in the fiscal 2009 budget." This remark seems to be reflecting his concern about the fact that the Japanese government is now studying the possibility of delaying to fiscal 2010 its earmarking of costs necessary for new contracts related to the construction of an alternative facility for the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station.

(2) Editorial: Japan should show plans to help cluster bomb victims

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
November 27, 2008

A signing ceremony will be held in Oslo, Norway, on Dec. 3 for an international treaty banning cluster munitions. The Japanese

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government also supports the treaty and will sign it.

Cluster munitions, also known as cluster bombs, are air-dropped or ground-launched munitions that scatter hundreds of smaller submunitions or bomblets to attack ground targets, such as tanks. This bomb is criticized as inhumane because many of its bomblets can be left unexploded to cause tragic damage to civilians after battles.

After the Cold War, the United States and other countries used cluster bombs in the wars in Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Unexploded bomblets left in farmland and other areas hamper postwar reconstruction efforts. This is why the cluster bomb is referred to as another type of landmine.

Nongovernmental organizations in Western countries therefore launched the Cluster Munitions Coalition (CMC) to push for a total ban on cluster munitions. The driving force of this move has been a network of NGOs that worked to establish an international treaty prohibiting antipersonnel landmines and that also made efforts for an international campaign against landmines, which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.

Mid-size countries in Europe and the CMC worked together and promoted international public opinion against cluster bombs. In May this year, their efforts were shaped into an international consensus for an almost total ban on the cluster munitions.

Japan is one of the countries that have cluster munitions. The Japanese government was initially reluctant to support the idea of placing an all-out ban on cluster munitions, taking the position that cluster munitions are useful for repelling landing enemy troops at the water's edge. However, major European countries, including Britain and Germany, moved to support the cluster ban treaty. Given this move, the then prime minister, Yasuo Fukuda, decided to support the treaty out of humanitarian consideration.

One of the pillars of Japan's diplomacy is "human security," which emphasizes humanitarianism and human rights. Eliminating cluster munitions is consistent with this human security drive. Foreign Minister Nakasone should attend the signing ceremony and make a strong appeal to the world for no more victims. Japan should work together with European countries and other proponents to urge such opponents as the United States, China, and Russia to think twice

about their stance against the cluster ban.

In 1997, the treaty to ban antipersonnel landmines was signed. The then foreign minister, Keizo Obuchi, who decided on Japan's participation in the treaty, attended the signing ceremony. On that occasion, Obuchi promised that Japan would provide a total of 10 billion yen over five years in an effort to remove landmines and help victims. This commitment was highly appreciated in the international community.

Japan should also come up with plans for its contributions to such international efforts as removing unexploded bomblets and providing aid to victims.

The Japan Campaign to Ban Landmines (JCBL), a member of the CMC, is working on the Japanese government to extend a helping hand to cluster victims with a wide range of measures, including creating a law to help disabled people, in addition to gathering information

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about victims and providing medical and social rehabilitation aid. There must be many ways for Japan to meet needs for the relief of victims.

The treaty will come into effect about six months after the first 30 countries have ratified it. Japan should become one of the 30 countries and set about scrapping its cluster munitions right away.

Japan was late in ratifying the anti-landmine treaty, so it could not be among the first 40 countries that put the treaty into force. Japan must not make the same mistake again.

(3) U.S. Army to court-martial soldier for rape of Filipino woman in Okinawa in February

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 1) (Full)
November 27, 2008

The Public Relations Office of U.S. Forces Japan announced yesterday that the Army will court-martial Corporal Ronald Hopstock, 25, for the alleged rape of a Filipino woman in Okinawa in February of this year.

The U.S. Army in Okinawa made this decision on Nov. 25. It is still unknown when and where the court-martial will be held, but the trial is likely to be set for late February. Hopstock will be subject to trial by high court-martial, where most serious cases are tried.

The Okinawa-based soldier is also charged with procuring a Japanese prostitute and disobeying a liberty order.

Hopstock belongs to the Patriot Missile (PAC3) unit. In a preliminary hearing in October to decide on whether to hold a court-martial, he claimed that the sex with the woman was consensual, insisting on his innocence. He reportedly is performing his duty, like other soldiers.

The Okinawa Prefectural Police Headquarters sent the case to the public prosecutors' office this April for the alleged rape of and injury to the Filipino woman. The Naha District Court decided not to prosecute the case in May because of insufficient evidence.

SCHIEFFER